

***Congressman  
J. Randy Forbes***  
*Fourth District of Virginia*



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Forbes: "No senior should be forced to choose between putting food on the table or buying the medicines they need."***

*House-Passed Medicare Package Provides Drug Benefit to over 900,000 Virginians*

**Washington, DC** – Congressman J. Randy Forbes (VA-04) announced the passage of a bipartisan Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit that will help over 40 million seniors and disabled persons on Medicare. The bill passed by a final vote of 220-215 early this morning.

"As a member of the Speaker's Prescription Drug Action Team, I have always been committed to providing a prescription drug benefit for seniors. I firmly believe that no senior should be forced to choose between putting food on the table or buying the medicines they need," Forbes commented.

"Within six months after the bill is signed, Virginia residents will be eligible for Medicare-approved prescription drug discount cards, which will provide them with savings between 10 and 25 percent off the retail price of most drugs."

"In Virginia, all of the 947,104 beneficiaries will have access to a Medicare prescription drug benefit – for the first time in the history of the Medicare program – beginning in January 2006. In exchange for a monthly premium of about \$35, seniors who are now paying the full retail price for prescription drugs will be able to cut their drug costs in half."

"This bill also establishes Health Savings Accounts or HSAs. HSAs are tax-advantaged savings accounts that can be used to pay for medical expenses incurred by individuals, their spouse or their dependents. These tax-free accounts are portable, so that they transfer from job to job and into retirement."

(continued)

“In addition, this legislation will provide seniors who live in rural areas more access to health care providers and services, including free physicals, screenings and disease management assistance.”

Forbes concluded: “Our seniors have waited too long for much needed relief. The reforms in this legislation will put patients before paperwork and ensure that doctors continue to serve seniors through Medicare. Although it is not perfect, this bill is a positive step in the right direction in making prescription drugs affordable and providing reforms to modernize and strengthen Medicare for seniors today and tomorrow.”

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